



CONCRETE SAFARIS

Youth Transforming The World
Starting In Their Own Backyards

2020

Friends,

2020 brought unimaginable loss and disruption to the East Harlem community, and around the world. 2020 also revealed the resiliency of our community, including the incredible children and youth that pushed for services for themselves and their families, and the employees and volunteers that never stopped working to serve the youth and their families outdoors in East Harlem at Concrete Safaris.

Throughout the year, children and youth adapted to the ever-changing challenges facing them and their families, and benefited from CS' outdoor programming, resources, and community by: growing, consuming, and distributing organic produce along with hand sanitizer and masks to their families and neighbors; navigating virtual classrooms; walking, biking, and playing at a social distance on Open Streets; helping their families to care for the sick and organize funerals; securing referrals for wrap-around services; establishing a Youth Council to advocate for the services they and their community needed, registering voters, and distributing Thanksgiving food packages and holiday gifts; taking on paid internships in outdoor play, gardening, and health media at our Outdoor Leadership Academy - SYEP; and supporting an Adopt-A-Bed program at our community gardens so local residents could get outside, socialize, and grow their own food. Every action taken was driven by the mission to prepare youth in East Harlem and beyond to lead healthy lives and shape their environment through outdoor education, play, exploration, and community engagement.

Moving forward, young people and their families are preparing for an in-person and hybrid programs, elements of the Strategic Roadmap to strengthen our year-round education to workforce pipeline ensuring that youth have hands-on opportunities to shape the physical environment where they live. We invite you to be a part of these adventures!

In Health,



Mac Levine, MPH
Founding Executive Director



Michael Woolley
Chair, Board of Directors

Mission and Values



Our Mission

To prepare youth in East Harlem and beyond to lead healthy lives and shape their environment through outdoor education, play, exploration, and community engagement.

Why Concrete Safaris?

Young people do not play outdoors as often as they once did. Three barriers preventing children and youth in East Harlem from playing outside on a regular basis are fear of perceived or real violence, lack of supervision, and supplies with which to play.

Adventure

Bravery

Creativity

Curiosity

Discipline

Safety

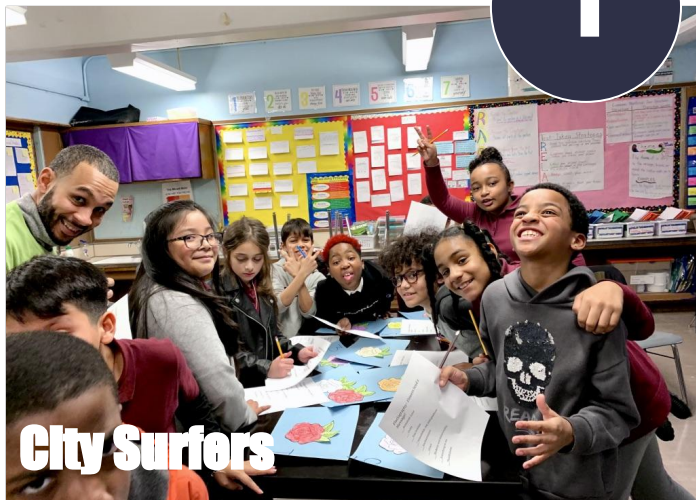
Healthy Risk Taking

Shared Values



Concrete Safaris' 4 Key Programs

1



City Surfers

CS' after-school program's primary goal is to improve the health and fitness of East Harlem children. It pivoted from engaging 72 children for 15 hours each week from PS 57 and PS 182 in East Harlem to a virtual format through June 2020.

2



Outdoor Leadership Academy

This year, over 200 youth (ages 14 – 24) participated in a 5 to 12-week internship program. The goals are to expose youth to environmental health employment opportunities, develop their leadership skills, and involve them in leading local children in healthy activities.

3



Green Exercise Days

Local residents and volunteers participated in our inaugural Adopt-A-Bed program, growing food for themselves and the community while beautifying our gardens at Jefferson and Washington Houses.

4



NYC Open Streets

This was an opportunity for community members and essential workers to walk, skate, scoot, and bike at a social distance on East 115th Street between Park and Third Avenues from May – August 2020.



Quotes from City Surfers

“We go gardening which I like best of all because we plant and work as a team which helps us with our social skills.”

- **Granville**

“What I like about after school is that we go outside every day and do exercise. My favorite thing to do is gardening because we get to learn a lot of things about plants and how it grows. We also get homework help and learn from my mistakes. When I heard about this program I told my parents to sign up QUICK!!!!”

- **Nakiya**

“I like Concrete Safaris because we could see our friends more, do homework here so we won't have to at home and we could go places. I love like bike riding”

- **Jashey**

What it's all about:

Concrete Safaris' after-school program's primary goal is to improve the health and fitness of East Harlem children. City Surfers gardened, cycled, took photos and held an exhibition, and went on field trips and nature adventures until the last day of in-person school in NYC on March 16th. They joined virtual after school through June, doing fitness, gardening and science, and leadership workshops. Of course, getting to see their friends and instructors was the best part!

Partners:

- NYC Public Schools 57 and 182
- Office of Council Member Diana Ayala
- NYC Department of Health
- New York City Department of Youth
- New York State Health Foundation





2 Outdoor Leadership Academy

What it's all about:

This year, 206 youth (ages 14 – 24) participated in a 5- to 12-week program during summer and school year internships. The goals were to expose teenagers to environmental health employment opportunities, develop their leadership skills, and involve them in leading local children in healthy activities. Summer youth participated in weekly, 3-hour, career readiness sessions in financial literacy, professionalism, leadership, other topics, family planning. School year youth participated in weekly, 1-1.5-hour professional development sessions. Youth were linked to external health, educational, and professional development services on an as-needed basis.

Our Partners:

- Icahn School of Medicine at Mount Sinai
- NYC Department of Youth & Community Development
- NYS Office of the District Attorney
- NYC Housing Authority
- NYC Department of Health
- Guardian Life Insurance Company
- Verizon Media
- SCOR Reinsurance
- Morrison & Foerster
- Deloitte
- Wilson Daniels

74%
of young people reported leaving the program with good or great Career/ Workforce knowledge.

95%
of young people demonstrated gains in at least one Career Readiness Capacity.

Outcomes:

-7,245 Internship hours for 14-15-year-olds that generated \$44,700 in summer stipend income for OLA Interns

-112 Summer Interns

-9 School Year Interns

-36 Professional development sessions in financial literacy, professionalism, leadership, other topics, family planning

3

Green Exercise Days

Community Gardening

In May 2020, our team returned to the gardens to prepare them for community use.

East Harlem was declared a COVID hotspot, and many residents stayed inside to avoid contracting the virus. Schools were not in session so students were not visiting the gardens with their classes. Companies had canceled in-person volunteerism for the season. Plus, some of CS' usual online partners were not posting our volunteer opportunities for fear of liability issues. CS posted volunteer opportunities on its social media, website, and e-newsletter, as well as Eventbrite. Staff spread informational postcards in residential buildings and to passersby.

Pretty soon, neighbors joined CS' first Adopt-a-Bed program, growing food for their households or to distribute to neighbors for free.

Community gardeners began tending their plots up to 7-days per week.

One youth loved to water the whole of Mad Fun Farm, and made it his mission to show up every weekday for a few hours to do so.

In September, Saturday Garden Volunteer Sessions returned, and new volunteers found our gardens and returned month after month to support the food production and beautify the spaces.



What volunteer gardeners have to say about gardening during COVID-19...

What motivates you to volunteer?

“Teaching gardening skills to our children and learning lots of new skills and helping out to make the garden a beautiful place”

“To make our community better and help kids to understand how important is to eat healthy (veggies) and spend time outdoors”

What would you say is the main reason for volunteering with us?

”Supporting NYCHA residents in efforts to improve quality of life”

”I like working in gardens, and providing food for a community is a bonus.”

”It’s fun and fulfilling.”

What do you like best about coming to the community gardens?

“The community and the work!”

“An organized and high-impact volunteering event.”

“Working outside, in a garden, with a group of people. The staff are great!”

Gardens provided:

14 Community Garden Volunteer Sessions

Open Hours, 7-days/week for Community Gardeners & Adopt-A-Bed.

Partners:

- NYC Housing Authority
- Bartlett Tree Experts
- Mayor’s Office of Criminal Justice

4 NYC Open Streets

Concrete Safaris hosted the first NYC Open Streets In East Harlem.

These NYC Open Streets were an opportunity for residents and essential workers to walk, skate, scoot, and bike at a social distance at the peak of the pandemic. People of all ages were able to see the sky for the first time in months. Others were delivering food to those afraid to leave their homes. Still others commuted to work and protests around the City.

2,000

participants
attended CS' NYC
Open Streets,
located on
115th Street
between Lexington
– Third Avenues.

Partners:

- NYC Department of Transportation,
- NYPD 23rd Precinct Community Affairs



Youth Leadership Council

Alumni from the Outdoor Leadership Academy founded the Youth Leadership Council to take action in the community.

Canned Food Drive

YLC members collected canned foods to distribute to neighbors for Thanksgiving.

Holiday Toy Drive

YLC members collected toys to distribute to local children and families in need.

Voter Registration

YLC members registered neighbors to vote in the national election.

Youth Leadership Council 2020

Michelle
Marlene
Emily
Redat
Daniel

Virtual Volunteerism:

Gardening, career-readiness, strategic planning, marketing, design, evaluations, IT, events – Volunteers answered our calls to action throughout the year.



Please support East Harlem families this Thanksgiving by dropping off canned food donations at:

Concrete Safaris Inc.
158 E. 115th Street, Ste 144
New York, New York 10029
10AM - 5PM

Canned Food Drive
Now until Nov. 25, 2020
HOSTED BY OUTDOOR LEADERSHIP ACADEMY

CONCRETE SAFARIS

Lead Staff



Mac Levine

Founding Executive Director

Ms. Mac manages operations and leads the team with her strong vision of experiential education's power to help children grow as healthy leaders.



Claire Farnan

Garden + Project Coordinator

Ms. Claire educates children, youth, and the community about urban agriculture and food justice at Jefferson Gardens and Mad Fun Farm.



Alexis Tovar

Volunteer Projects Coordinator

Mr. Alexis recruits, trains, and supports volunteers.



Christopher Hartsfield

Programs Director

Mr. Chris manages all four programs, ensuring that children and youth learn, play, and explore safely in the great outdoors of East Harlem.



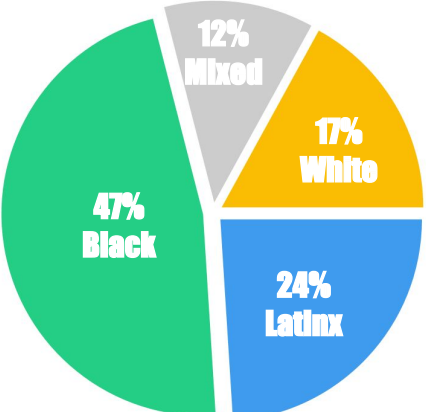
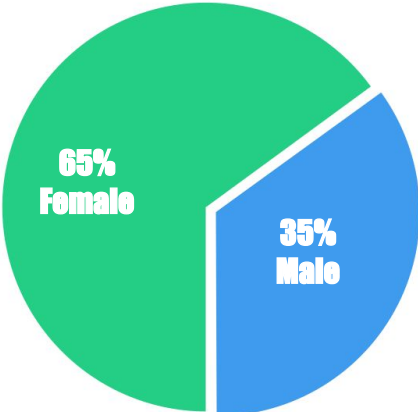
Phylisha Villanueva

Education Coordinator

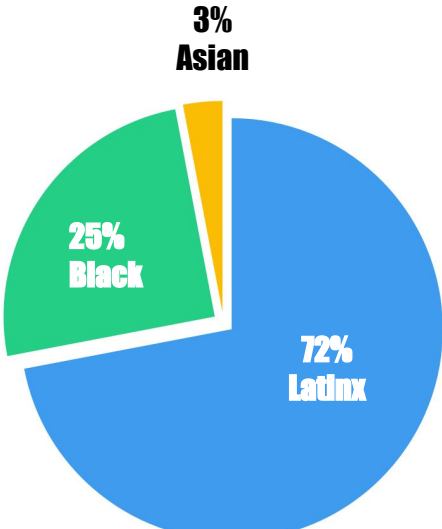
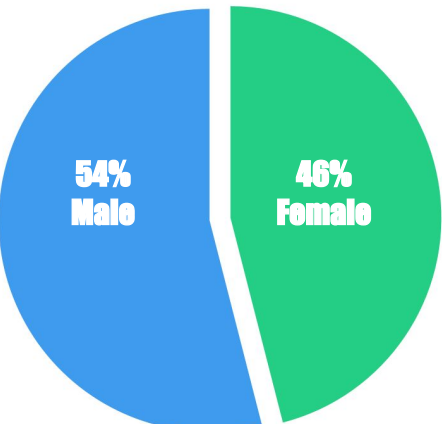
Ms. Phylli ensures that every participating child, youth, and family has access to educational, professional, and health-based opportunities.

CONCRETE SAFARIS 2020 DEMOGRAPHICS

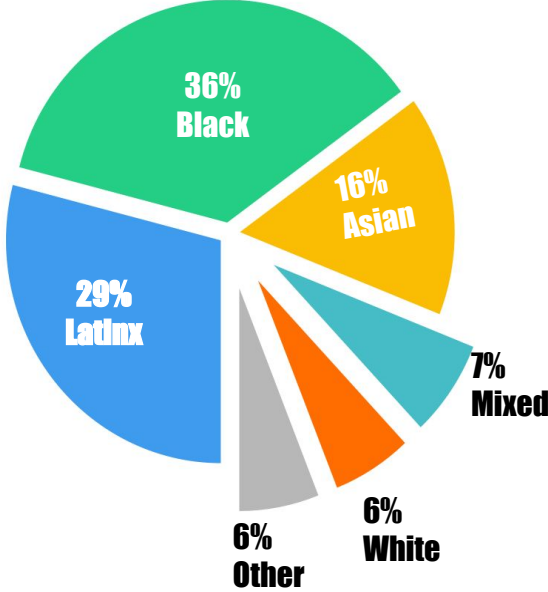
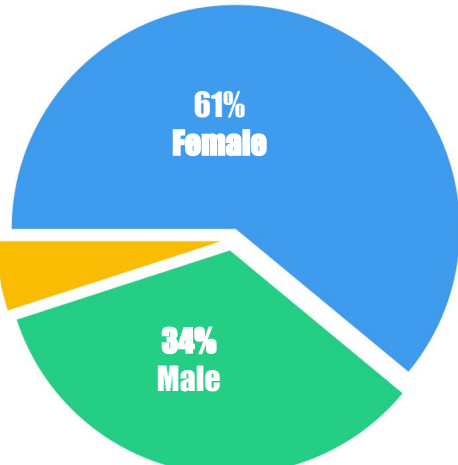
Staff:



City Surfers:



5% No response



OUR PARTNERS

Schools

Public Schools 57, 182, Harvard Business School Club of New York, Silberman School of Social Work's Community Navigators.

Government

Manhattan Community Board 11
Manhattan Borough President's Office Mayor's Fund to Advance New York City
NYC Department of Health
NYC Department of Transportation
NYC Department of Youth, NYC Housing Authority
NYPD 23rd, 25th, & PSA 5 Precincts
NYCSERVICE
NYS Department of Environmental Conservation
NY County Office of the District Attorney
Office of Council Member Diana Ayala
Office of NYS Assemblyman Robert Rodriguez
Office of Senator Serrano

Foundations

First Cornerstone Foundation
Lily Auchincloss Foundation
The Morrison & Foerster Foundation
New York State Health Foundation

Individuals

273 volunteers donated their time in 2020.

Non-Profit Organizations

Exalt
American Institute of Architects,
The Association to Benefit Children Children's Aid Society
East Harlem Human Services Consortium Open Architecture / New York
El Barrio's Operation Fightback
Getting Out & Staying Out
Partnership for After-School Education
SCAN-Harbor
Union Settlement Association.

Corporations

Deloitte
HQ Capital
Intuit
L+M Development Partners
Microsoft Philanthropies
Murphy Burnham & Buttrick Architects
Oath
Refinitiv
SCOR Reinsurance Company
Seward & Kissel
Blumenfeld Development Group, Ltd
Verizon Media
Wilson Daniels



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Multinationals, HSBC Securities (USA), Inc.

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City of Portland, Oregon

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Assistant Professor, Departments of Pediatrics and
Preventative Medicine,
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CONCRETE SAFARIS

Get Involved

Concrete Safaris, a 501(c)3 non-profit organization, operates thanks to the generosity of individuals, corporations, government, and foundations.

Make a 100% tax-deductible donation in support of youth transforming the world starting in their own backyards.

Contact Us

Concrete Safaris Inc.
158 East 115th Street, Suite 144
New York, NY 10029

646.869.1503

concretesafaris.org

All photos were taken by children and youth enrolled at Concrete Safaris.